

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
Minutes of March 9, 2021**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board members Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell, Nathaniel Miller, Charles Morse, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Mark C. Anarumo (President, Norwich University), Daphne Larkin (Director of Media Relations & Community Affairs, Norwich University), Jon Ignatowski (Economic Development Director), Jamie Stewart (Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation), Shannon Doney, Susan Stillinger, and Carolyn Stevens.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. In keeping with Governor Phil Scott's COVID-19 "stay at home" directive, the meeting was held remotely.

**II. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD**

- a. Election of Chair.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to appoint K. David Maxwell as Chair. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Maxwell abstaining.**
- b. Election of Vice-Chair.** Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Morse, to appoint Julie H. Goodrich as Vice-Chair. **Motion passed 4-0-1, with Board member Goodrich abstaining.**
- c. Select Board Subcommittee Assignments.** Chair Maxwell recommends that the subcommittee assignments remain the same as in the previous year, which would be: **Budget and Financial Review** (Board members Goodrich and Morse); **Town Buildings & Energy** (Board members Goodrich and Stevens); **Economic Development** (Board members Maxwell and Morse); **Norwich University** (Board members Maxwell and Stevens); **Highway Planning & Project Oversight** (Board members Miller and Stevens); **Public Safety Oversight & Planning** (Board members Goodrich and Miller); **Labor Agreement & Bargaining** (Board members Goodrich and Maxwell); and **Policy Review** (Board members Morse and Stevens). In addition, Board member Stevens will continue to serve as the Select Board's representative on the Water & Wastewater Utility Commission and Board member Morse as the Select Board's representative on the Electric Utility Commission. Board member Miller and Manager Schulz will serve as Northfield's representatives to the Mountain Alliance. Stephen Fitzhugh will be Northfield's representative to Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) and Manager Schulz the alternate representative. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Morse, to approve the subcommittee and other appointments as listed above. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- d. Regular Meeting Schedule (Dates, Time, and Location).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Morse, to have the Select Board continue to meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 p.m. Although these meetings are normally held in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library, due to COVID-19 the Select Board will continue to hold remote meetings for the time being. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- e. Designation of Official Newspaper(s).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to designate *The Northfield News* and the *Times Argus* as the municipality's official newspapers for legal notices, advertisements, etc. The social media website Front Porch Forum also will be used to post meeting agendas, announcements, etc. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

#### **IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)**

- a. **Mark C. Anarumo, President, Norwich University (NU).** President Anarumo said currently only one (1) NU student is COVID-19 positive and in isolation. This is a commuter student who has not been on the NU campus this school year but President Anarumo said in the interest of full transparency this positive result is included on their online COVID-19 Reporting Dashboard. He also announced 15,168 COVID-19 tests of NU students, faculty, and staff have been performed during the current school semester (Spring 2021) and this encompasses 2,445 tested individuals. President Anarumo said there have been no positive tests for twenty-one (21) days. He noted that twenty-eight (28) days without new infections is the usual goal as that is how long the virus can survive in the environment. President Anarumo said NU students were allowed to move off campus this semester if they felt uncomfortable with the social distancing and other restrictions. There now are 1,018 students residing on campus. President Anarumo said the refunding of room and boarding charges will provide a short-term financial hit but the health and safety of the NU family was always considered the paramount concern. This emphasis has resulted in recent national media stories on the actions NU has taken in response to the pandemic. There also has been extensive media coverage (New York Times, CNN, etc.) of President Anarumo's recent decision to stay in the dormitories for a few nights in order to share what the students are going through. This was both a learning experience for him as well as a show of support. President Anarumo said prospective students and their families will be able to tour the campus by automobile this spring but will not be allowed entry to buildings (with the exception of access to designated restrooms). Winter sports (hockey, basketball, etc.) remain ongoing but without fans this year. All the games are livestreamed on the NU website and cardboard cutouts of fans have been installed to fill the void in Kreitzberg Arena. Spring sports (baseball, softball, lacrosse, etc.) will be held outdoors and conference games will be supplemented with games against regional teams, etc. President Anarumo said NU students now are allowed to work off-campus in healthcare, emergency services, etc. once they have been vaccinated. No-contact food deliveries from local restaurants also is being allowed. President Anarumo asked the community to keep an eye on the NU COVID-19 Reporting Dashboard (<https://www.norwich.edu/covid-19-dashboard>) for further updates. He is very proud of this webpage and considers it the best online COVID-19 reporting tool in the nation. Board members Goodrich, Stevens, and Miller had no questions at this time but all were appreciative of President Anarumo's actions, especially of his focus on keeping the community informed of NU developments. Board member Morse asked about NU's COVID-19 vaccination policy. President Anarumo said NU faculty and staff are encouraged to get their shots when they become eligible but this cannot be mandated by the university. Given that the current vaccination rollout is focusing on older people and those with ongoing health issues, it probably is unlikely that considerable numbers of NU students will have been vaccinated before Graduation Day (05/01/21) but President Anarumo hopes all will be vaccinated before returning to campus next August. Chair Maxwell thanked President Anarumo and Ms. Larkin for attending tonight and for the valuable information. He will notify them should the Select Board members request their presence at a future meeting.

#### **V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT**

- a. **Jon Ignatowski, Economic Development Director.** Mr. Ignatowski wanted to provide an update regarding his proposal to use existing economic development funds to establish a local revolving loan fund, to be known as the Northfield Community Revolving Loan Fund (NCRLF). He also has updates on three (3) other matters.

Mr. Ignatowski met with the Economic Development Subcommittee (Board members Maxwell and Morse) last week (03/03/21) to discuss the proposal that he presented to the Select Board members at their last regular meeting (02/23/21). The subcommittee meeting resulted in two (2) recommended changes to Mr. Ignatowski's initial proposal. The first is to increase the amount to be transferred from the economic development fund from \$15,000 to \$17,000. Added to the ±\$3,000 in an existing revolving loan account, this would create an initial NCRLF balance of about \$20,000. Mr. Ignatowski intends to apply for a grant later this month that (if successful) would double this to \$40,000. The other suggested change is that instead of engaging the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC) to manage the loans in return for two percent (2%) of loan interest, these services will be conducted in-house. Board member Morse asked if there is any additional documentation for this proposal. Manager Schulz noted Mr. Ignatowski provided a packet of materials at the last meeting. Mr. Ignatowski confirmed he had nothing to add to what had been previously distributed. Board member Morse would have liked to have had a one-page summary of the NCRLF proposal that the Select Board members could formally approve and sign. Chair Maxwell said any motion to approve this proposal can refer back to the distributed materials.

Jamie Stewart from CVEDC is present again tonight. Chair Maxwell has a few questions for him. First, he wanted to know how long CVEDC has had its revolving loan fund, the total amount of the fund, etc. Mr. Stewart said their revolving loan funds has been in place for five (5) years, the total amount is \$500,000, and there currently are nine (9) loans out with seven (7) different businesses. The fund now has \$170,000 in the bank but there are two (2) requests for \$50,000 each in the pipeline. Chair Maxwell asked how much Northfield should hold in reserve in its revolving loan account. Mr. Stewart said given the limited initial amount (\$20,000), he did not feel it would be a good idea to tie up a lot of the funds in one business. It also probably would be best to focus at first on existing businesses that could use a small loan (±\$3,000) to refurbish their workplaces, etc. Mr. Stewart said small businesses can do a lot with such low amount loans. He also noted the loan fund would be replenished by repayments with interest. Chair Maxwell asked what was the average terms for loans. Mr. Stewart said he usually follows normal bank practice with terms up to three (3) years. In rare cases, this might be extended to five (5) years. Even though Northfield will not be hiring CVEDC to administer the loans, Chair Maxwell asked if Mr. Stewart was still willing to assist Mr. Ignatowski with starting up the NCRLF. Mr. Stewart said he had made a commitment to Mr. Ignatowski to help him in any capacity. He is willing to provide training and serve as Mr. Ignatowski's mentor in NCRLF matters. Board action on this matter is scheduled for later in this meeting (see below).

The other items Mr. Ignatowski wanted to discuss tonight included the possibility of him working with East Street businesses to create a parklet during the summer months. Due to post-COVID uncertainty, this action would be reduced in size from previous years with each business making use of only two (2) parking spaces each. Mr. Ignatowski emphasized that this is only a suggestion at this time and there will be a full Select Board discussion at a later time. Manager Schulz has spoken to Mr. Ignatowski about this and has advised going slow and seeking some form of Select Board acquiesce before creating a specific proposal. Chair Maxwell said any such discussion would have to be warned in advance with the input of local business as well as public notification. Mr. Ignatowski then reported Northfield was awarded \$20,000 by the Central Vermont Regional Commission (CVRPC) for transportation-related studies. This might include new crosswalks and creating new parking areas to provide greater access to the Town Forest.

The final item was Mr. Ignatowski's announcement Northfield also was awarded a \$18,000 Better Places grant from the Vermont Community Foundation and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. These funds will be used to revitalize the Common with better lighting, more outside seating, etc. The Select Board members were pleased with the grant awards Mr. Ignatowski was able to obtain. Chair Maxwell thanked him for his efforts.

## **VI. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION**

### **a. Liquor License Renewals**

- 1. American Legion (1<sup>st</sup> Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 2. American Legion (3<sup>rd</sup> Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 3. Dollar General.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 4. Norwich University (1<sup>st</sup> Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- 5. Norwich University (3<sup>rd</sup> Class).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

### **b. Outside Consumption Permit**

- 1. American Legion.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the outside consumption permit. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## **VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. February 23, 2021 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## **VIII. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. Approval of Warrant #17-21.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #17-21 in the amount of \$1,501,939.05. Board member Goodrich noted that of the total warrant amount, \$1,139,600 represented taxes collected by the municipality and forwarded to the Paine Mountain School District. Another \$247,492 was spent purchasing power for the Northfield Electric Department for future resale. Board member Stevens, who also serves as Treasurer on the Brown Public Library (BPL) Board of Trustees, was concerned by the amount of heating fuel consumed by the BPL/Northfield Historical Society building in recent weeks. He will try to find ways to reduce this consumption as the building is closed to the public now due to COVID-19. Board member Stevens then asked about a \$3,585 legal bill. Manager Schulz said this was Northfield's share of expenses related to the now withdrawn lawsuit filed against several Vermont Town Clerks over reduced access to records due to the pandemic. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. Approval of Warrant #17-21A.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #17-21A in the amount of \$5,445.53. This payment is for an installment on a RSMS (Road Surface Management System) loan from FY 2013/2014. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. Approval of Biweekly Payroll through February 21, 2021.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$101,765.10. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

## **IX. SELECT BOARD**

- a. **Northfield Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund.** Chair Maxwell noted this matter was fully discussed at the last regular meeting and earlier this evening. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to authorize the establishment of a Northfield Community Revolving Loan Fund as presented in the memorandum submitted by Economic Development Director Jon Ignatowski at the Select Board regular meeting of February 23, 2021 with the changes subsequently recommended by the Economic Development Subcommittee, i.e., the management of individual loans will be done internally by municipal staff and the amount transferred from the Economic Development Fund into the revolving loan account will be increased from \$15,000 to \$17,000. Board member Goodrich asked if this was a proper use of the economic development funds that were authorized by voters at the March 4, 2014 Northfield Town Meeting. Manager Schulz believes this is an appropriate use since the approved article stated the fund was created for “the purpose of economic development.” In addition, the Select Board later (September 2015) approved a policy governing the use of these funds that specified they would be spent “in the best interest of Northfield, which is to expand the tax base and bring business to Northfield.” Manager Schulz believes creation of the NCRLF is in accord with this policy. Board member Goodrich asked who would create the loan documents and manage the loans. Manager Schulz felt any legal agreement would require the assistance of an attorney but the municipality’s Accounting Department should be able to handle loan collections, etc. Board member Morse noted the documents provided earlier by Mr. Ignatowski did include some boilerplate loan forms that would only have to be slightly revised for use. Mr. Ignatowski confirmed these documents came from the CVEDC and are standard practice. Chair Maxwell noted the loan committee would have at least one banker on it to provide advice on such documents. Board member Stevens favors the creation of the NCRLF as something that should be done to promote local economic development. Board member Morse said if it were not for the aforementioned grant application deadline (03/31/21), he would favor postponing this decision until the summary document could be drafted for Select Board approval. Chair Maxwell also would have liked this document but he is comfortable with the initial memorandum from Mr. Ignatowski supplemented with the subcommittee’s suggested revisions. He said the next important step would be the creation of the five (5) to six (6) member loan committee. Chair Maxwell would like to amend the original motion to include the stipulation that this loan committee will be appointed by the Select Board. There was no objection to this friendly amendment. **The revised motion was approved 5-0-0.**
- b. **Certification of Compliance of Road and Bridge Standards.** Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) asks each municipality to confirm at this time each year that its Town Road and Bridge Standards either meet or exceed VTrans minimum requirements. He said the standards the Select Board members approved on July 23, 2019 do meet these criteria. VTrans also asks municipalities to confirm they have an “up-to-date highway network inventory,” which Northfield does possess. Approval of this document will make Northfield eligible for VTrans grant applications and also increases the amount available locally for natural disaster relief. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the Certificate of Compliance for Town Road and Bridge Standards and Network Inventory. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- c. **Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways.** Manager Schulz said this is another document provided by VTrans that must be approved and submitted annually. This financial plan indicates the amount of state funds to be provided to Northfield in the next fiscal year (\$1,828,130) along with a breakdown of how these funds will be spent, i.e., winter maintenance, non-winter maintenance, major construction projects, etc. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways and authorize its submittal to the Vermont Agency of Transportation. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

#### **X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

- a. **VTrans Grant Applications.** Manager Schulz stated that after a one-year suspension due to COVID-19, VTrans is resuming awards of Paving and Structures Grants. Manager Schulz plans to apply for a Structures Grant in order to address the much-needed replacement/rehabilitation of the Stony Brook Road Bridge. The application deadline is April 15, 2021 and he is hopeful this year's application will be successful since Northfield hasn't received such state grant funds for some time.
- b. **Turkey Hill Maple Farm Lease Agreement.** Manager Schulz has engaged local forester Rose Beatty to inspect the municipal property leased to Turkey Hill Maple Farm for maple tree tapping. Ms. Beatty will complete the inspection before the end of the month, which is significant as one of the lease agreements will expire in April 2021. There have been public concerns expressed that certain conditions in the agreement have not been followed and/or the municipality is not being fully compensated for the number of taps actually installed. Ms. Beatty's report will be an important factor when the decision is made whether or not to renew the lease agreement.
- c. **Brown Public Library Furnace.** Manager Schulz said this furnace was recently inspected and three (3) to four (4) boiler sections have some leakage. He received a quote of \$6,731 to repair the damage and this should provide several years of additional service. The cost of installing a new boiler would be about \$18,000. Manager Schulz will work with the Town Buildings and Energy Subcommittee (Select Board members Goodrich and Stevens) to determine the best course of action.

#### **XI. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. **Tax Sale Property.** Board member Goodrich remembers the Select Board authorized Manager Schulz last year to bid on one of the tax sale properties if no one else was interested. She asked if the municipality now owns the property. Manager Schulz confirmed the municipality did successfully bid on a delinquent property on Burnham Road but the landowner has one year to redeem the parcel by paying the delinquent taxes and other related costs. Manager Schulz has written the landowner to inform of this. If nothing changes by the one-year anniversary of the tax sale (08/27/21), the municipality will take possession of the property through a quit claim deed.
- b. **Recreation Committee update.** Board member Goodrich said she, Board member Morse, and Manager Schulz attended a remote meeting with the remaining members of the Recreation Committee last week (03/03/21). There was discussion of rebranding the committee and developing a new mission statement at their next meeting. Board member Morse said it was a very productive meeting and well attended by interested members of the public.
- c. **Winter Road Maintenance.** Board member Stevens is grateful Highway Foreman Trent Tucker is having his crew push back the snowbanks along the backroads. This should make road conditions much better during Mud Season.

- d. **Main Street Bridge Replacement Project.** Board member Stevens thinks it would be a good idea to install pedestrian rights-of-way near the intersection of North Main Street and Water Street while the new bridge is being constructed. This would be a lot less expensive than installing new sidewalk in the area. Manager Schulz has been in contact with VTrans regarding this project and will make this suggestion. VTrans will be meeting with the Select Board members again when the project's Conceptual Plans have been completed and are ready for public review and discussion.
- e. **Common Water Fountain Redesign.** Board member Stevens has been in contact with the NU Civil Engineering Department about plans to reconfigure the fountain on the Common so the water could be recirculated. It is likely this will become a student project during the next school year. If a good design is presented to the Select Board, this could be a great saver of municipal water.
- f. **Overdue Utility Bills.** Board member Morse attended last week's Joint Utility Commission and was surprised to learn the amount of customer accounts in arrears is over \$37,000. This compares to about \$2,750 at this time last year. It seems many utility customers are taking advantage of the Public Utility Commission's moratorium on utility disconnections to run up high bills. Manager Schulz has sent a letter to the local utility customers with overdue bills to inform them that the moratorium will not last forever and they will be held responsible for eventually paying the charges.
- g. **New State Requirements re: Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO).** Board member Morse said the State of Vermont will be imposing stronger regulations regarding the elimination of CSOs. He felt it would be a good idea to have Northfield's proposed South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Project ready to go if stimulus funds become available in the near future. Chair Maxwell confirmed Governor Scott said there would be stimulus funds made available for such projects. Manager Schulz said this municipality was in good shape as the plans for this project are about ninety percent (90%) complete. This puts us in a very good position to apply for stimulus funds when they become available.
- h. **Annual Town Meeting.** Chair Maxwell wanted to thank Town Clerk Kim Pedley, Assistant Town Clerk Janel Doney, and all the Justices of the Peace for a very smooth-running Town Meeting election at the Northfield Middle/High School last week (03/02/21). The number of people voting in person was lower than in recent years but that was to be expected during this pandemic.
- i. **Recognition of Peter G. DeMasi.** Board member Goodrich noted the recent passing of Northfield resident Peter G. DeMasi who was a municipal employee for over thirty (30) years including several years as Highway Foreman. A longtime member of the Northfield Fire Department, Mr. DeMasi served as Fire Chief (2007-2013) as his father (James DeMasi) did before him. Continuing the family tradition, his son (Peter J. DeMasi) is the current Northfield Fire Chief. Chair Maxwell agreed Peter G. DeMasi was a valued member of this community and will be sorely missed.

**XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Stevens, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of March 23, 2021.